

VZCZCXR06689
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #2433/01 3501639
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 151639Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4705
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0353
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1572
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0558
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0455
RHMFSS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFSS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002433

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DRL - KAREN GILBRIDE
DEPT PASS TO USAID/DCHA/OFDA - L. MARIE, USAID/AFR/WA - T.
WAY
DAKAR PASS TO USAID - R. DAVIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2018

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KIRF ECON ASEC NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ICRC DISCUSSES JOS AND VOLUNTARY
PRINCIPLES WITH DCM

REF: A. ABUJA 2377 AND PREVIOUS
¶B. ABUJA 2049

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On December 11, Jacques Villettaz, Regional Delegate for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) called on the DCM to discuss voluntary principles as they relate to the extractive industries, particularly the oil companies in the Niger Delta. DCM used the opportunity to inquire about the ICRC's view on the situation in Jos (ref A). Villettaz reported that the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps were nearly empty and that the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) continued to provide food. He praised the efforts of the Nigerian Red Cross, which he said was once considered a fraudulent, mismanaged organization, but now was doing good work. It is rare to hear good reports about Nigerian institutions, making the praise of the Red Cross and confirmation of NEMA's efforts even more valuable under the circumstances. According to Villettaz, the ICRC's main focus was now on the more than 500 prisoners still detained without formal charges as a result of the violence in Jos. END SUMMARY.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN JOS

¶2. (C) During a December 11 meeting with the DCM and Poloff (notetaker), Regional Delegate for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Jacques Villettaz said he did not think things in Jos would get worse at this time, but maintained that the atmosphere remained tense and security must stay vigilant. Villettaz reported that all the camps established for internally displaced persons (IDP) were nearly empty as people returned to their homes or left to be with family. Although he agreed with reports that conditions were quite poor, he noted that both NEMA and the government were "doing their job" and providing food. He added, however, that when NEMA first started distributing food, people in the camps threw rocks at them due to NEMA's association with the government. Villettaz said that volunteers wearing the Red Cross emblem, by contrast, never ran into any trouble and were allowed to move freely as needed during the conflict. Villettaz praised the work of

the Nigerian Red Cross for its work on the ground, noting that its volunteers in Jos responded immediately and assisted the injured in getting to local hospitals. Villettaz added the Nigerian Red Cross had thousands of volunteers across the country who regularly performed their duties well. He acknowledged the negative reputation of the Nigerian Red Cross due to previous fraudulent activities by previous management. The new management, however, is working very hard to reverse that image and prove they are a worthy partner, according to Villettaz.

¶3. (C) In response to DCM's inquiry about the number of fatalities in Jos, Villettaz responded that while the official death toll was still uncertain, it was likely around 350; he acknowledged, however, that several families were still looking for relatives. He explained that those still unaccounted for could have accidentally been buried in the mass Muslim graves, escaped town if they feared arrest, or be in prison. Those that were arrested during the initial violence and remained in prison without formal charges were now the ICRC's main concern. The government initially reported the arrest of 3,000 people, but later released 2,000 after a request was made to the wife of the Governor to intervene on behalf of those erroneously arrested, he said. Villettaz said more than 500 prisoners were reportedly brought to the Central Jail in Jos, which was already overcrowded with 900 prisoners in a facility meant to accommodate only 800.

VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES

ABUJA 00002433 002 OF 002

¶4. (C) Villettaz requested the meeting with the DCM to discuss the Voluntary Principles Platform (VPP) as it related to promoting human rights and corporate social responsibility among the oil companies in the Niger Delta. He said that the ICRC is trying to create a peripheral approach to the VPP with support from the UK, Norway, Netherlands, and hopefully the U.S. Villettaz suggested the ICRC would be a good partner in the push for GON responsiveness on the VPP, intimating their neutrality created less concern over motives in the region. Noting that the ICRC currently provided training to the JTF, Villettaz added that the ICRC intended to become more aggressive in its approach to assistance in the Delta region. DCM informed Villettaz about DAS Krilla's VPP and corporate social responsibility discussions with oil company representatives during his recent visit to Abuja (ref B). DCM told Villettaz that we would put him in touch with those reps as well as the contact in Vice President Goodluck Jonathan's office who expressed interest in the VPPs.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Under the circumstances, reports of the Nigerian Red Cross performing well are encouraging. Knowing they now have an established and capable network of volunteers across the country could be helpful in future situations. Despite reports that the government was slow to react to the initial violence in Jos, we are pleased to hear that NEMA came through in the end. As it is rare to hear praise of Nigerian institutions, we felt it noteworthy to mention their efforts. While it has been difficult to get the VPPs on the GON priority list, the ICRC's influence should encourage increased engagement on the issue. END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
Sanders